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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

Document No. 14

SUBJECT: Area and Language Training

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## 1. PROBLEM:

a. To establish a policy concerning area and language training required by Agency personnel.

b. To develop a systematic central program of area and language studies for Field and Headquarters personnel within the Agency.

## 2. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM:

a. There is no Agency-wide policy directive or regulation concerning area and language training required by Agency personnel.

c. This policy directive makes no reference to Headquarters personnel, for whom area and language knowledge is often of the utmost importance, and it is only partially and sporadically observed with respect to overseas personnel. Area training conducted by the Area Divisions is generally inadequate in both scope and content. No systematic central programs of area study are now being conducted within the Agency. Very limited use is being made of available external programs. These external programs, though the best available, are unduly expensive and often lack specific applicability to Agency needs. Language training of good quality is conducted by the Office of Training but, because of the restricted nature of the requirements placed upon the Office, the program does not meet the realistic needs of Agency personnel for language competence. The facts are that not enough languages are taught to enough people, nor are they taught intensively enough to achieve the degree of mastery which many employees should have; and too much training is being

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conducted, at great expense, in external facilities over which the Agency has little or no real control.

d. There is general recognition-in-principle throughout the Agency of the importance and desirability of area and language training, but a serious lack of conviction as to the indispensability of this kind of knowledge as part of the intelligence officer's professional equipment. Implementing action falls far short of expressed interest and intentions. For example, the Agency's stated requirements for area training at non-CIA facilities during the current fiscal year totaled 337 individuals, including 107 from DD/P, who would require basic or advanced training for periods ranging from a few days to a full year or more. During the first nine months of this fiscal year a total of 36 persons were actually put into such training, including 6 from DD/P.

e. Inadequate preparation of Agency personnel in terms of area and language knowledge places an inevitable ceiling upon the level of operational effectiveness which may be attained, and is reflected constantly as a contributing factor in instances of operational weakness or failure.

f. The importance of area and language training has been recognized by the Senate Appropriations Committee which stated, in its recent report (No. 1541) on the State Department appropriation, "The Committee was concerned with testimony to the effect that the Department has not sustained an adequate training program in the fields of area and language specialization. This competency is vital in the effective conduct of our international affairs."

### 3. DISCUSSION:

a. The fact is self-evident that persons engaged in foreign intelligence activities should have a working knowledge of the countries and areas with which they are concerned, including a sufficient knowledge of foreign languages to make possible the effective, accurate performance of their missions. The extent and depth of the knowledge required will vary between Field and Headquarters personnel, with the type of employee, and with the nature of operational assignments, but some knowledge of foreign areas and languages is essential for nearly all employees of the Agency. Yet training in these important respects is seriously neglected.

b. Almost daily this Office observes the unpreparedness of the Agency to perform its mission where area knowledge and language competences are essential for effective, accurate operations, either overseas or at Headquarters. Persons continue to be assigned abroad with little or no preparation in terms of a practical understanding of the environment in which they are to operate. In most languages, even the common ones, the Agency is not adequately equipped, and in some languages we are totally unprepared to meet operational requirements. These circumstances constitute a serious weakness in the Agency's capabilities.

c. It is seldom possible to attribute an instance of operational weakness or failure entirely to one or another specific cause, but it can be shown that in a great many cases where operations have gone badly or have failed, or intelligence has been faulty, too little or too late, the lack of area and language

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knowledge has been present as a contributing factor. For example:

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- (1) A Division of this Office was asked recently to assist in finding someone capable of translating conversational [redacted] The immediate availability of desired intelligence depended upon such a person. A survey was made of the capabilities of CIA, the Department of State, and the National Security Agency, and not one person with the necessary ability was located in any of these three agencies. Exploitation of the material in question was indefinitely postponed, immediate usefulness of the intelligence presumably was lost; and the time, effort, cost and risks involved in obtaining it were correspondingly wasted. This is only one of several reported instances in which there have been delays, up to several months, in exploiting foreign language materials because of the lack of language knowledge among both Field and Headquarters personnel.

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- (2) In a country of Southeast Asia where operations of significant size and importance are being conducted, one Agency employee has an adequate command of the spoken and written language, and adequate familiarity with the people and the area. He acquired his knowledge during a previous tour of duty in the country, and now is applying it to good effect in a second tour. The Area Division concerned states that this lack of language ability on the part of the staff is a serious operational handicap; that indigenous agent personnel generally do not speak English; that it is almost impossible [redacted] because of the language barrier; and that there is a serious problem of exploitation of documentary material.

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(3)

[redacted]

barrier, and voluminous reports come to Headquarters for translation and use. The timeliness of information is affected seriously, and questions of reliability remain unresolved, sometimes for months. It is reported that Headquarters officials have concluded finally that much of the information reported is highly suspect.

- (4) In a Far Eastern area a project ran for many months, and produced reports which were considered to be very good

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and received high praise. A subsequent inspection revealed that the reports were largely fabrications, based on gleanings from the local press, which the Case Officer was unable to read.

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(5)

Agency employees assigned to the operation, one had a working knowledge of the language and the country involved. He was unable to cope with all the problems of communication which arose, with the result that interpreters had to be used in all aspects of the operation. The operation failed, security-wise and otherwise, with a monetary cost to the Agency in excess of one million dollars (\$1,000,000). There is no specific proof, but rather a strong presumption, that lack of language knowledge was one of the major handicaps involved.

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nation was revealed as to how the misunderstanding occurred, but the language barrier undoubtedly played a part. The Agency has not recovered its very considerable investment in the failure.

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had seen for the first time. There is a possibility that from what might have been a very fruitful possibility.

- (8) From this same country it has been reported recently that a valuable principal agent has become alienated and may possibly be lost to the Agency's service. Final details are not yet available, but it is presently the opinion of responsible Agency officials that an inexperienced Case Officer, who is unfamiliar with and insensitive to the customs and standard of values of the local inhabitants,

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may have given unwitting offense and caused the agent to devise grounds upon which to discontinue his relationship.

Many more examples exist to support the general conclusion that an operator can have only partial success in his assignment unless he understands the area in or concerning which he is to work, and unless he has among his essential qualifications a knowledge of the language commensurate with the requirements of his job. It is unfair to the individual and to the interests of the Agency to provide him with less.

d. On the other hand, there are a great many examples of highly successful operations in which the American principal or principals involved possessed an understanding of and the ability to communicate with their foreign associates.



e. Area and language knowledge are important in relation to personnel management as well as operational effectiveness. All field personnel, including families, can make a much more effective adjustment to the overseas environment if they are given some prior knowledge of the area, including at least an introduction to the language. Their mental and physical health are benefited by training preparation for the "cultural shock" involved in transfer to a strange and sometimes difficult environment. Personnel turnover can be reduced by such training, resulting in substantial fiscal economies to the Agency.

f. The problems of adequate area and language knowledge are serious now, and there is little prospect that they will diminish in future unless more effective action is taken to meet them. On the contrary, they are likely to become worse. The situation with respect to  provides a case in point.



Experience indicates that personnel assigned to peripheral areas who lack  area and language training are often unaware of important

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have to speak through interpreters. This same advantage pertains when one is able to read newspapers, reports, propaganda pamphlets and other materials in the language in which it was written. These advantages of area-and-language trained personnel over those without such training have been demonstrated by field experience.

A final point, of long-range significance, is that current developments indicate that English language teaching is declining rapidly, and that whenever Americans are again able to enter [ ] they will be far more handicapped by inability to speak [ ] than they were in the past.

g. The above rationale with respect to [ ] can be applied to a number of other countries and areas. The point has been made that we lack resources in

continuing need for more area and language competence concerning Eastern Europe

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and the Near East. In other words, we are badly prepared area-and-language-wise to meet current and future problems of the Agency.

h. Why should this situation exist? Because operating offices place higher value on operations today by an amateur than tomorrow by a professional. Because greater emphasis is placed on getting "dope" today, than on intelligence tomorrow. The situation is not unusual in which a Case Officer without

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i. At the present time area training is conducted largely in the form of briefing discussions and suggested readings by the various Area Divisions, each for its own personnel, or through the medium of external programs to which limited numbers of employees are assigned. There is no middle ground, and no provision for centralized instruction in area subject matter of common applicability, the "common denominators" of area knowledge which would be useful to the majority of employees. A good language training program is conducted within the Agency, which is supplemented by use of outside facilities in those cases where there are not enough students to justify development of an internal program. A fundamental difficulty with respect to area training is that there is no agreed definition of the nature and extent of area knowledge intelligence personnel should possess, and no firm Agency policy on required area training to guide operating components in setting realistic training requirements. Yet the Agency contains a wealth of area experience, information and materials which would be of great use in training, and our collective experience with area training methods is good. The problem is twofold: to bring about by policy direction a recognition of the importance of area training; and to assemble and adapt the resources necessary to build a good training program. The problem with respect to language training is largely one of policy; a policy directive is required which will bring about a definition of the degrees of language proficiency employees should have, will lead to the establishment of training requirements which reflect the realistic needs of the Agency, and the fulfillment thereof.

j. A well-rounded area training program need not be overly elaborate. For many employees a general descriptive knowledge of an area may be sufficient for present purposes. Others require knowledge in depth concerning areas of particular importance. Some need specialized training in the economics, politics, geography, etc. of a given country or area. Yet others require thoroughgoing area and language instruction. The training program, therefore, should include provision for: (1) individual orientation through guided self-study; (2) area survey courses on a group basis; (3) courses in the geography, economics, politics, etc. of particular countries or areas; (4) intensive area analysis, accompanied by language study; and (5) extensive area-and-language specialization, involving use of external as well as internal facilities. The provision of such programs on a centralized basis by OTR would be a valuable and economical service to the Agency, and would not conflict with the responsibility of the Area Divisions to provide specialized briefings for their

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personnel. Their briefings should be supplementary to, not in lieu of, general courses offered by OTR. Wherever possible, language training should be accompanied by appropriate area study.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS:

a. Both area and language training are of fundamental importance to the success of the Agency's mission.

b. Present arrangements for area training are grossly inadequate, and only a small fraction of the employees who require such training are receiving it. The language training conducted by OTR is of good quality, but the program is not adequate in scope and it does not meet the realistic needs of Agency personnel for language competence.

c. Present training efforts in both these fields are too dispersed, resulting in excessive costs and a training product which often lacks specific applicability to Agency needs.

d. Both area and language training suffer from the same basic difficulties: a lack of conviction on the part of Agency management as to their indispensability in the proper equipping of intelligence personnel; a lack of agreed requirements as to the degree of competence in these respects needed by personnel in various assignments; and the pressure of operational duties which makes it well-nigh impossible for many employees to devote sufficient time to training.

e. The resources exist with which to correct present deficiencies. What is needed is (1) official insistence that emphasis shall be on quality of performance rather than quantity; (2) determination of training requirements in terms of real needs of the Agency, and not in terms of the willingness of individual components to allow people to become prepared; (3) institution of procedures whereby the Agency can develop, through training, persons to meet its needs.

f. With only a modest increase in staff and facilities, the Office of Training can meet the Agency's training needs in these fields, and do so ultimately at reduced unit costs.

g. In addition to providing for its own needs, the Agency should build superior area and language training programs as a first step toward achieving the Inspector General's suggested goal of making OTR the Graduate School in the Intelligence field.

#### 5. ACTION RECOMMENDED:

a. That the Director of Central Intelligence issue a policy statement and directive incorporating the following points:

- (1) The implementation of the mission of the Central Intelligence Agency requires that all personnel not already possessing desired levels of competence shall receive such area and language training as is necessary for the effective performance of duty.

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- (2) Appropriate standards of area and language knowledge for all categories of employees will be defined by each major component in consultation with the Office of Training.
- (3) All employees will meet these standards as a condition of continuing in their present positions or receiving new assignments.
- (4) The Office of Training will provide training activities required to assist employees in meeting and maintaining the standards.
- (5) Action to implement (2), (3), and (4) will be immediate and continuing.
- (6) An Agency-wide program will be initiated as a feature of the general training program, to encourage participation of especially qualified personnel in area and language training. Fifteen Career Development slots and five Junior Officer Trainee slots will be reserved for such training assignments. The program will be administered by the Director of Training who will determine areas of study, will establish standards of participation, conduct and selection, provide academic supervision, and recommend assignments on completion. Applications may be submitted to the Director of Training, through appropriate Office Heads, by any employee of the Agency without reference to current duty assignment.
- (7) Until standards have been finally defined, the following minimum requirements will be used as a guide:
  - (a) Any person whose duty assignment involves working with substantive materials pertaining to a foreign area shall complete an area orientation course of not less than sixty-four hours either in the Agency or at an academic institution. This includes all professional and clerical personnel at Headquarters and all personnel designated for overseas.
  - (b) All persons designated for overseas assignment shall receive at least from sixty-four to one hundred and twenty-eight hours of instruction in the language of the area to which assigned, depending upon the difficulty of the language, or possess fluency equivalent to that of the average student who has completed this requirement.
- (8) Headquarters personnel will be given required area and language training as part of their duty assignments, and field personnel will receive required training before they depart for overseas assignment wherever possible.

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b. That the External and Language Training Division be authorized to add to its complement an Area Training Officer for each of the four major geographic areas, whose duty it would be to develop and conduct required area courses; and that two additional secretarial positions be authorized to support these officers.

c. That a continuing reappraisal be made by the Office of Training of all present use by the Agency of external area and language training facilities; that plans be carried forward to replace such activities progressively by internal Agency programs as the number of students becomes large enough to justify such action; and that the support necessary to equip the External and Language Training Division to assume the added workload be programmed in future budget planning.

d. That consideration be given to the establishment of a training reserve, in the form of a number of training positions not committed to operational duties, and in addition to existing Career Development slots, to be assigned to individual Agency components (Offices, Staffs, Divisions) for training purposes, to make easier the selection and detail to training of those employees who require it.



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MATTHEW BAIRD  
Director of Training

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## ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

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**INSTRUCTIONS:** Officer designations should be used in the "TO" column. Under each comment a line should be drawn across sheet and each comment numbered to correspond with the number in the "TO" column. Each officer should initial (check mark insufficient) before further routing. This Routing and Record Sheet should be returned to Registry.

FROM: Director of Training  
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x-3521

NO. ER 5-7789 (# rec'd by phone - fac not been thru E/R)  
DATE 7 July 1954 O+M2-2

TO	ROOM NO.	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS
		REC'D	FWD'D		
1. DDCI <span style="margin-left: 20px;">②</span>	124 Admin	7/13	5/5/55	JML	General Cabell:  This is the first of several staff studies which my Office is preparing on subjects touched upon but not resolved in the Inspector General's survey of OTR. This one is purposely long. It could be even longer if time permitted further research. Do you wish me to send these to you as they are completed or do you wish them held until all are completed and can be sent to you in a package? *
2. <del>DCI</del>					
3. DIR TNG					
4. COL BAIRD Eyes Only				M3	
6. DTR files					I suggest that the key, which is marked EYES ONLY, to the cases under Paragraph 3, <u>Discussion</u> , not be disseminated outside your office.  M3 M. B.
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